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In the claims:

All of the claims standing for examination are reproduced below with status indication.

1. (Previously presented) A network-based system for enabling users of the system to obtain current agent-status information related to agents of an information-source facility connected to the network before initiating contact with the agent or agents of the information-source facility comprising:

 a first server node connected to the information-source facility and to the network;
 a second server node connected to the first server node and to the network, the first server node accessible to the second server node;
 a network-capable appliance connected to the network, the second server node accessible to the network-capable appliance; and

 a software application distributed on at least the first and second server nodes, the software application enabling distribution of the agent-status information;

 wherein the user operating the network-capable appliance accesses the second server node, states the intent of the call and requests the agent-status information, the agent-status information accessed from the first server node by the second server node, based on the stated intent and is delivered to the requesting user.

2. (Original) The network-based system of claim 1, wherein the network is a data-packet-network.

3. (Original) The network-based system of claim 2, wherein the data-packet-network is the Internet network.

4. (Original) The network-based system of claim 3, wherein the information-source facility is a communication center marketing products and or service to the users.

5. (Original) The network-based system of claim 4, wherein the agents are human

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resources employed by the communication center.

6. (Original) The network-based system of claim 4, wherein the agents are automated systems implemented at the communications center.

7. (Original) The network-based system of claim 5, wherein the agent-status information includes a description of the agent and or agents capabilities, the number of calls waiting in the agent's or agents' queue or queues, and an estimated time for response by the agent or agents.

8. (Original) The network-based system of claim 7, wherein the number of calls waiting information and the estimated time for response information is averaged over a group of agents.

9. (Original) The network-based system of claim 7, wherein a number of calls waiting information and the estimated time for response information is specific to a single agent.

10. (Original) The network-based system of claim 5, wherein the agent-status information delivered to the requesting user is specific to the request initiated by the user.

11. (Original) The network-based system of claim 5, wherein the agent-status information automatically updates periodically during a user session.

12. (Original) The network-based system of claim 5, wherein the agent-status information is continually streamed to the requesting user during session.

13. (Original) The network-based system of claim 5, wherein the agent-status information is pulled from the first server node by the second server node according to the user's request.

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14. (Original) The network-based system of claim 5, wherein the agent-status information is pushed to the second server node by the first server node and is available to be pulled by the user.

15. (Original) The network-based system of claim 5, wherein the software application uses instant message technology in the transfer of agent-status information.

16. (Original) The network-based system of claim 5, wherein the software application uses streaming technology in the transfer of agent-status information.

17. (Original) The network-based system of claim 5, wherein the software application embeds the agent-status information into a Web page requested by the user.

18. (Original) The network-based system of claim 1, wherein the functions of the first and second server nodes are implemented within a single server node connected to the communications center, the network, and accessible to the network-capable appliance.

19. (Previously presented) A method for enabling users connected to a network to obtain current agent-status information related to agents of an information-source facility connected to the network before initiating contact with the agent or agents of the information-source facility comprising the steps of:

(a) periodically compiling and preparing the agent-status information at the information-source facility;

(b) rendering the compiled agent-status information available in a network-connected server; and

(c) serving the agent-status information or a portion thereof to network-connected users over a network path upon request, based on a stated intent from the user.

20. (Original) The method of claim 19, wherein the method is practiced over a data-packet-network.

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21. (Original) The method of claim 20, wherein the data-packet-network is the Internet network.

22. (Original) The method of claim 21 wherein in step (a), the information-source facility is a communication center.

23. (Original) The method of claim 22 wherein the communication center markets products and or service to the users.

24. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein in step (a), the agent-status information specifies the current status of human resources employed by the communication center.

25. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein in step (a), the agent-status information specifies the current status of automated systems implemented at the communications center.

26. (Original) The method of claim 23 wherein in step (a), the agent-status information is compiled using agent-monitoring software.

27. (Original) The method of claim 26 wherein in step (a), the agent-status information includes a description of the agent or agents capabilities, the number of calls waiting in the agent's or agents' queue or queues, and an estimated time for response by the agent or agents.

28. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the number of calls waiting information and the estimated time for response information is averaged over a group of agents.

29. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein a number of calls waiting information and the estimated time for response information is specific to a single agent.

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30. (Original) The method of claim 27, wherein the agent-status information delivered to the requesting user is specific to the request initiated by the user.

31. (Original) The method of claim 27 wherein in step (b), the agent-status information is automatically updated periodically at the network connected-server.

32. (Original) The method of claim 27 wherein in step (c), the agent-status information is continually streamed to the requesting user over the network path during session.

33. (Original) The method of claim 27 wherein in step (c), there are more than one server nodes in line on the network path, the server nodes hosted by the communications center.

34. (Original) The method of claim 33 wherein in step (c), the agent-status information is served using an instant message technology.